

COMMANDER'S HATCH

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Battle Command Vehicle: Command Post for the 21st Century

One topic that will often elicit intense and differing views among mounted warriors is that of the proper vehicle for the commander. In the past, the debate has raged over whether a tank, a personnel carrier, or some other platform best suited the requirement. I am of the opinion that commanders, particularly at brigade and above, will choose a platform based on their command style and the factors present on the battlefield. However, the capabilities provided by the Information Age, and the corresponding impact on the way we conduct operations, will dictate functional characteristics of the leader's battle command vehicle, regardless of what specific platform it is based upon. Digitization of the battlefield not only influences the C³ design of the vehicle, but also the entire concept of command posts and battle staffs.

The battle command vehicle concept envisions a suite of digital communications capabilities consisting of situational awareness displays, the ability to pull intelligence and other data on-demand, the capability to broadcast and receive graphics, imagery, and information, and finally, automated decision support aids to assist in rapidly synthesizing information and developing options. This suite should prove adaptable to numerous platforms — tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, aircraft, and others. It must also be compatible with the capabilities being planned for dismounted

elements under the 21st Century Land Warrior concept. In this way, seamless battle command can be achieved, and commanders may use the platform most suited to their mission, battlefield conditions, or command style.

Such a C³ capability would enable the commander to truly conduct high-tempo, continuous operations. More than that, if provided to the battle staff, it would give the staff unprecedented real-time information, and the capability to do rapid, continuous planning. These capabilities could fundamentally alter the size, composition, and operational concept for battle staffs and command posts. The commander's BCV, with one or more assistants aboard, could perform the function of the current TAC command post. A very small battle staff mounted in a platform with similar or expanded capabilities could replace the current TOC, with its relatively large number of vehicles and personnel. All C³ functions within a task force or brigade across all of the battlefield operating systems might be conducted from a single battle staff or command and control vehicle (C²V). Synchronization of maneuver, fires, logistics, and the like would be assured to an unprecedented degree.

By leveraging the power of technology to automate appropriate tasks, the smaller battle staff is provided the time, information, and capability to operate at a greater tempo and higher level of

detail, but with fewer manpower resources. In short, the battle staff would consist of electronic data collectors and sorters, and human decision-makers.

A task force or brigade might have two or more C²Vs, so that one could be conducting the current fight, while the others plan future operations or rest. Such command posts would be more survivable due to their reduced size, mobility, redundancy, and adaptability to a variety of platforms.

As we work to equip Force XXI, the question is not what vehicle the commander should ride, but rather what changes will be brought about in doctrine, tactics, organization, and training as a result. The battle command vehicle concept and the fundamental adjustment of command post structure and function may be one of the most significant outcomes. The purpose of the BCV and other applications of technology is to enable us to have better informed and more capable commanders. Better leaders and soldiers, not more sophisticated equipment, will make the greatest difference. In the end, commanders will not command from "the screen." Most of their time will be spent in the hatch or talking face-to-face with other commanders. The fine balance between the personal aspects of command and "systems" must be maintained. A good commander will always put his personal touch at the decisive point.